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Gap Analysis of Organizational Culture and Performance in Valley View University, Ghana

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Abstract:

Every organization has its own culture, regardless of region, country, or sector. This culture is dynamic, which is usually created within the organization. What is ideal, however, is how such cultural changes can be managed to influence a company's performance and effectiveness, its employees' morale, and productivity, and its ability to attract, motivate and retain talented people significantly. This is a theoretical analysis of the organizational culture and performance at Valley View University. The study employed four cultural models to analyze the existing corporate culture in the University to determine the gap. The study revealed that the external models, which are adhocracy and market cultures, best describe the cultural practices of the University, and they are less effective in the use of the internal models, which are the clan and hierarchy cultures. Nonetheless, the University appears to be interested in employee development, which is cost-driven and has relaxed in its income-increasing strategies due to the inappropriate review, monitoring, and cultural implementation. In practice, some critical decisions do not involve the employees and students. The University focuses on standards, rules, and regulations but not on efficiency. The study concludes that although the University has spent more on some changed cultures, little is earned from them, hence, the financial challenges which have resulted in the retrenchment of some employees, employee and student apathy, and the teaching out of some programs, and the eventual closure of some centers. Therefore, a change of organizational culture not well thought through and managed adequately is worth remaining unchanged.

Keywords: Adhocracy culture, market culture, clan culture, hierarchy culture

1. Introduction

1.1. Overview of Organizational Culture

Regardless of region, country, or sector, every organization has a culture of its own (Rusa & Rusu, 2015). Culture has been the long-time focus of anthropologists as they seek to understand different groups around the globe. However, it has been only recently that organizational researchers have begun to discover the close links between culture, the performance of organizations, and the behavior and attitudes of people in organizations. A major factor in an organization's success is its culture. Organizational culture can have a significant influence on a company's performance and effectiveness, its employees' morale, and productivity, and its ability to attract, motivate and retain talented people (Warrick, 2017).

As stated by Aktas, Çiçekb, and Kiyac (2011), in today's increasing competitive conditions, reaching the desired organizational efficiency level attracts both academicians and practitioners' interest much more. Culture is a model of norms, values, beliefs, and attitudes which affect organizational behavior. Culture is also a catalyst for the organization's decisions, actions, and, eventually, overall results, be it private or public sector. Therefore, the idea of corporate culture should be provided in advance and strategically managed to keep the company aligned with the needs and easily recognized by future business customers (Urbancová, 2012).

Again, corporate or organizational culture consists of 'values,' 'beliefs' and 'standards' affecting the thoughts and behavior of people in enterprises. They are critical factors used to describe corporate culture. The corporate culture determines how employees describe where they work, how they understand the business, and how they see themselves as a part of the enterprise (Hitkaa, Vetrákováb, Balážováa & Danihelováa. 2015).

The definition of organizational culture exists in many versions. As far as Kilmann (1985) is concerned, organizational culture could be defined as shared philosophy, ideology, value, assumption, beliefs, hope, behavior, and norms that bound the organization together. Robbins (1984) mentioned it as common perceptions which are held by the members of an organization; a system of common meaning, while George and Jones (2002) stated it as the informal design of values, norms that control the way people and groups within the organization interact with each other and with parties

outside the organization. Organizational culture is defined as 'the set of key values, assumptions, understandings, and norms that is shared by members of an organization and taught to new members as correct' (Daft, 2005, p. 422).

A set of conceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and values generally acceptable and maintained for a relatively long time is corporate culture. This culture determines the inside atmosphere of the organization; it is some (intangible) product that emanates from the people's thinking and their activities performed in the organization (Kampf & Ližbetinová, 2015). This culture can be created by the founder, can emerge over time as an organization faces challenges and obstacles, or be developed by the management to improve their company's performance (Cameron & Quinn, 2006). This was also affirmed by Warrick (2017) that culture could either be built in a purposeful way or left to chance.

Organizational culture includes anything from observable norms such as the employees' uniform or even unobservable norms, such as being agreeable with public opinion (O'Reilly, 1989). It also includes the organizational situation's integration (Wu & Lin, 2013) and the views incorporated by all employers and employees in an organization (Gómez-Mejía, Balkin & Cardy, 2010). O'Reilly (1989) and Wu and Lin (2013) reported that organizational culture is compulsory for all organizations because it heightens employees' engagement in an organization. And, for private institution's long-run growth, employee engagement itself is essential (Institute for Management Development, 2014).

Corporate culture is the pattern of shared values and beliefs that help individuals understand organizational functioning and, thus, provide them with norms for behavior in the organization (Berson, Oreg & Dyr, 2005; Deshpande & Webster, 1989). Organizational culture could be a strategic asset for the organization in that it increases the adaptability of and fit between an organization and its environment (Kotter & Heskett, 1992; Peters & Waterman, 1982). Members continuously interpret aspects of their work environment, and these interpretations are, as well as the ways in which they are enacted, from the culture of the organization (Martin, 1992). Among the manifestations of culture are rituals, group norms, habits of thinking, and espoused values (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Schein, 1992; Trice & Beyer, 1993).

In a dynamic environment 'there is a rapid and discontinuous change in demand, competitors, technology, or regulation so that information is often inaccurate, unavailable, or obsolete' (Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988, p. 738). In this context, because cause-effect relationships are generally indiscernible or simply unknown (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996), the resulting means-ends ambiguity in decision making affords CEOs even greater discretion and latitude of action (Simsek, Heavay & Veiga, 2010). Once the culture is initially formed, key leaders and in particular CEOs, are responsible for managing the evolution of the organization's basic assumptions and for modifying the culture in order to keep up with the changing demands of the environments (Schein, 1992; Agle & Mitchell, 1999; Wally & Baum, 1994).

O'Reilly (1989) classified two criteria to assess the strong culture in an organization in the California Management Review. He mentioned that: Firstly, there is the act of approval or disapproval on employee attitude in the organization; and secondly, there is an agreement on shared organizational value among employees in the organization. Any organization that has many employees who fail to meet these two criteria exhibits weak organizational culture, according to O'Reilly (1989). As a result, employees with a low fit of organizational culture will have a high intention to leave the organization (O'Reilly, Chatman & Caldwell, 1991).

1.2. Culture Models

Cameron and Quinn (2006) define four cultures as adhocracy, clan, market, and hierarchy. The adhocracy culture emphasizes flexibility and change; it is externally orientated. It is usually seen in companies that operate in dynamic contexts and in those seeking to be leaders in their markets. The key values in an adhocracy culture are creativity, entrepreneurship, and risk-taking.

The clan culture also stresses flexibility, but it is internally focused. Characteristics of clan culture firms are team-work, employee involvement, and corporate commitment to employees. A market culture preaches control and stability and is externally oriented. The core values of firms with this culture are goal achievement, consistency, and competitiveness. Finally, a hierarchy culture is also control-oriented, but it focuses on the internal organization. Its key values are efficiency and close adherence to norms, rules, and regulations (Sanz-Valle, Naranjo-Valencia, Jiménez-Jiménez & Perez-Caballero, 2011).

2. Organizational Culture and Performance

Employees within the organization who push themselves forward to achieve success and recognition must recognize, admit, and adjust to the particular corporate culture (Nedeliaková, Sekulová & Nedeliak, 2014). Organizations with good corporate culture are usually more successful than organizations with a lack of corporate culture for as much as employees appreciate the same values and standards of behavior (Stacho & Stachová, 2013). According to the sociological interrogation, the entity should maintain this culture in the future.

However, the enterprise should also work towards creating and promoting elements of clan culture, which represents a friendly place to work, where people enjoy a pleasant family atmosphere. Thus, the entity can act as an extended family and not as a standard economic entity (Hitkaa et al., 2015). In contrast to a competitive atmosphere focusing on results, as it is in a market culture that prevails at present, the entity should promote team-work, communication, and support education and employee development (Malachovský, 2014).

Accepted values, goals, participation in all important issues, and feelings of fellowship are important in maintaining loyalty and traditions that would hold the enterprise together. Regular meetings are considered very beneficial as also the employees have a clear idea about their tasks and the entity direction. Routines, common among employees and managers, also help managers to maintain good work relationships. Enterprise management should focus mainly on employee motivation, employee reward system, and recognition (Hitka & Balážová, 2015).

As a result, Putthiwanit (2015) stated that the faster employees could adapt to private enterprises' organizational culture, the more competitive and innovative the private enterprise will be. Organizational culture greatly influences many aspects of the organization, for example, employees' interaction, organizational functioning, decision-making process, as well as employees' success in coping with challenging situations (Yoel, 2015).

3. Background of Valley View University

In 1979, the West African Union of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church started Valley View University as Adventist Missionary College in Bekwai, Ashanti. In 1983, the College was relocated to Adenta, and finally to its present site at Oyibi on the Accra Dodowa Road in the Greater Region in 1989. In 1997, the University became the first private Tertiary educational institution to be accredited by the National Accreditation Board of Ghana. The Valley View University, in 2006, received a Presidential Charter to be the premier private University in Ghana to award her own degrees, diplomas, and certificates. The University serves students from several African and non-African countries. It admits qualified students who accept the University's Christian principles and lifestyle that form the foundation for its operation.

The vision of the University is 'to be a center of excellence for Christian Education.' The core values include 'Passing on a Passion of Excellence (the commitment to attain higher standards and expectations), Integrity (a life that matches convictions with actions. Integrity encompasses honesty, authenticity, and trustworthiness) and Service (the willingness to serve God and humanity in a selfless manner)'. The mission is to emphasize academic, vocational, and technological excellence for service to God and humanity and the educational philosophy is to be committed to the spiritual, intellectual, physical and psychosocial development of skillful youth and adult who seek both practical and intellectual preparation for a life of service to their communities.

4. Culture in Valley View University

The culture in Valley View University, per their vision, core values, and mission are basically centered on excellence; excellence in the admission process, teaching students in the classroom, providing meals to students, accommodating students on campus, attending to students' needs and wants, creating a conducive atmosphere of worship for students, and attending to employees' needs and development, among others. Indeed, the following are some of the easily identified cultural practices in Valley View University:

- Orientation for fresh students. This is where the vision, the core values, and the mission are passed on to students.
- Lecturers sometimes attend classes in time, and they sometimes begin and end every class with a prayer.
- Students are intemperate in their dressing even though here is a billboard that displays how students should appear in their dress and communicates the core values.
- Faculty, staff, and students do not wear jewelry on campus.
- There is Saturday Sabbath Worship, Sunday Bible Studies, Wednesday Mid-Week Prayer, Friday Vesper Service, Cooperate Worship, and Week of Spiritual Emphasis. These are attended by interested persons. Students are sometimes forced to attend.
- Townhall meeting. This is a management meeting with Faculty and staff, and it comes off on the last day of every month.
- Vegetarian meals are served on campus.
- The SRC celebrates their week once every academic year, usually in the second semester, while the halls celebrate their week in the first semester every academic year.
- For Regular, Sandwich and Evening Schools, mode of teaching and learning is face-to-face, and Hybrid (online and face-to-face) teaching and learning for Distance School. Nonetheless, during this COVID-19 Pandemic period, all the streams (Regular School, Sandwich School, Evening School, and Distance School) are fully online.
- Application form and admission letter could be accessed in hardcopy form or online medium.
- Faculty, staff, and students issues are not attended to at all or are not handled promptly.
- Students are frustrated in offices for documents on issues not attended to, among others.
- Payment by the Division and the Conferences for sponsorship of students with no time limit.
- The marking allowance is not paid.
- The Invigilation allowance is not paid.
- Centers and Campuses opening across the country.
- Employment of staff spouse. Spouses who may not have the requisite skill and competence are offered the employment opportunity to occupy positions they have little or no knowledge about.
- Beneficiaries of University Sponsorship leaving or not coming back at all upon completion of the program.

5. Gap Analysis

Valley View University has a culture that is generally based on the Seventh-day Adventist philosophy, and old cultures are amended and new ones created as and when the situation demands, all in the quest to improve enrollment of students and subsequent increase in financial performance, all things being equal. But the issue is whether the University is doing the right things as far as culture is concerned to take advantage of its enormous benefits and perhaps, increase the financial performance.

Sometimes, in the University, the change of culture is not communicated in advance, and where it is, stakeholders are not given enough time to accept it before it is rolled out, which creates wary among employees and students. For instance, the introduction of the online teaching and learning in 2017 for the distance school, and the one-off students' fees

policy have brought about a lot of resistance and agitations among lecturers and students because of the swiftness of the change in culture. This atmosphere shows that employees and students are not well involved in some key decisions and have affected team-work and organizational commitment to employees and students. Nonetheless, the compulsory shift to online teaching and learning due to the COVID-19 has been accepted by lecturers and students with a lukewarm attitude. This is because, this change of culture, though unanticipated, is perceived to be temporary, even though, lecturers and students, especially those in the regular, sandwich and evening modes, could not plan for. Thus, complains by lecturers and students about internet connectivity issues in some areas of the country and the online final exams.

The culture is not clearly seen as being part of the management's strategic plans. Most of the infrastructures being put up on campus have defects that put the excellence the University upholds in question. Again, unused building materials are left at the mercy of thieves at the site. In the past, when people see Valley View University students and graduates, they wish to come themselves to be students or recommend to others, but this cannot be said today. This is because the University is finding it very difficult to pass on their core values to students for the fear that they will lose them to other competitors, both public and private. Meanwhile, there are billboards all over the campus, communicating the dress code and the core values of the University to students. Hence, the University is not able to maintain its unique identity and thus, following others on the basis of competition. This means that the University has failed on its goal of admitting qualified students who accept the University's Christian principles and lifestyle that form the foundation for its operation.

On the University campus, only vegetarian meals should be served. This culture has faded out because most employees do not share this belief; therefore, non-vegetarian meals are served on campus, even with the top management presence. Again, the University used to sell its application forms in hardcopy form at the campus and the various Seventh-day Adventist Conferences in Ghana, but now applicants can access the application form online, submit it online and even receive admission letter online. Though this culture change, which was to prevent the perceived misappropriation of cash received from the sale of the form at the various Conferences and to make it available for wider potential applicants to access the forms with ease, the University is yet to realize the full benefits of this change. Poor internet connectivity across the country and in Africa at large have undermined the ultimate goal. That notwithstanding, there are reported cases of potential online applicants whose enquires and challenges in relation to admission are not responded to at all or promptly.

The decision by management in 2017 for Faculty to embark on enrollment drive across the country beginning every academic year is also an example of created culture based on the situation. Indeed, because of how this was communicated and took off, the decision has lost its substance, and no one knows whether it still applies. Again, the University used to have only one campus in Accra. But as part of strategic plans, other campuses and centers were opened to increase enrollment and, eventually, increase the financial status of the University. Though a good idea, some of them did not even receive academic board approval and yet were opened, and those that did are now struggling to survive. It is not surprising that the council has recently approved that certain centers be closed down impliedly, and certain programs should be taught out due to the financial challenges of the University. This is all because of how this culture, though good, was communicated and implemented.

Though academic requirement, it was the culture of the University to pay 'marking allowance' to Faculty after grades have been published and invigilation allowance. Nevertheless, it has now become the culture of the University not to pay marking and invigilation allowances to Faculty even though students are charged with it. Clearly, this culture is not written anywhere, but it has been the practice over the years, so it has become an accepted norm. While Faculty complain and are dissatisfied with these non-payments of allowances, the University itself is yet to realize the effect of this benefit on its financial performance.

The recently implemented culture of meeting employees on the last Friday of every month was supposed to bridge the communication gap between management and employees and to ensure that the employees have a clear idea about their tasks and the institution's direction. Nevertheless, this culture has not received the full endorsement of employees from the attendance recorded so far. This is because of the feeling that this culture was initiated 'just' to meet the Adventist Accreditation Associate's requirement and not seek its underlining benefits to employees and the University at large.

The culture of employment to spouses of staff may have affected the financial challenges of the University. Some spouses are employed to occupy positions they have no skill and the needed competence to hold. In these situations, such employees seem not to understand their job descriptions, let alone to devise better ways to improve on their work to ensure efficiency and to meet students' needs promptly. Again, there are cases where jobs are created for friends and relatives who may or may not have the requisite knowledge to fill. Such engagements that are not based on merit and fairness might have contributed to the nonperformance. Because such employees lack what it takes to constructively critique the status quo for better or improved ways of doing things; indeed, they only live in a world of 'Yes Sir, Massa.' Most of the complaints of Faculty and students involve staff in this bracket. Creating a family-like work environment is vastly or greatly different from this ideology that stifles growth.

The University's effort to develop staff and Faculty is laudable as this is evidenced by the fact that almost all Faculty and staff are in school currently. However, this has not yielded much to the University at the moment as from the fact that such an initiative could have done in batches to lessen the financial burden on the University. Indeed, there have been several cases where people complete and are not willing to stay, or they leave eventually without the University benefit from their development. Unfortunately, it appears such people leave without making any refund to the University. Again, it is believed that such people leave because of sponsorship package issues and perceived power struggle. These coupled with unsubstantiated rumor, and gossip among Faculty and staff have resulted in a sharp fall in team-work and employee commitment to duty. Thus, the University is not only battling with student enrollment but the risk of losing key competent Faculty and staff to other competitors and institutions overnight.

6. Conclusion

Organizational culture changes or evolutions are inevitable in our competitive corporate environment; thus, making organizational culture dynamic. However, what is ideal is how such changes are managed and monitored to be able to realize their enormous benefits.

Valley View University has experienced a lot of cultural changes which are in line with the assertion by Cameron and Quinn (2006) that culture can be created by the founder, can emerge over time as an organization faces challenges and obstacles, or be developed by the management to improve their company's performance. Nonetheless, some of these were not communicated effectively to the right targets or participants.

The billboards on campus, academic bulletin, student handbook, employee handbook, and the paraphernalia with the University inscription were expected to be effectively communicating the norms, rules, regulations, vision, mission, and core values to students and staff to ensure compliance. However, this has not been the case as the University is yet to realize the benefits these actions come with. Thus, having them alone is never enough, as Warrick (2017) stated that other leaders mistakenly think that by talking a lot about the culture, posting cultural values on walls, passing out books on culture, and placing cultural values on coffee mugs, the desired culture will happen.

Based on the assessment of the cultural practices of the University and their conformity to the existing literature, it could be said that the University is struggling to have a very strong culture, and this has accounted for the poor financial performance of the University lately. The University appears to focus on the external cultural models, which are the adhocracy and market cultures, and plays less emphasis on the internal cultures, which are the clan and hierarchy cultures. However, Hitkaa et al. (2015) stated that enterprises should work towards creating and promoting elements of clan culture, which represents a friendly place to work, where people enjoy a pleasant family atmosphere. Again, it could be said that the University has weak organizational culture per O'Reilly (1989) criteria to assess the strong culture in an organization since most employees, and even students, do not agree on the shared values; thus, resulting in the poor performance confirming the assertion by Stacho and Stachová (2013).

Regardless of the numerous cultural evolutions which have occurred over the period, the University has not been able to monitor, review, and adopt better cultures to be able to improve on its financial performance. Thus, in contrast to a competitive atmosphere focusing on results, as it is in a market culture that prevails at present, the University should promote team-work, effective communication, fairness, transparency, and practical excellence in all its endeavors.

7. Recommendations

- The Administration Committee (ADCOM) should make strategy and culture essential priorities in their decision making and practices.
- Before an existing culture is changed, management should adopt a standardized culture questionnaire, design questionnaires to fit the cultural ideals, or interview a cross-section of the people or focus groups regarding how they view the culture or culture changes.
- The University Administrators should identify, communicate, educate, and engage employees and students in cultural ideals.
- The University should appoint a culture team that will monitor the culture (both written and unwritten) throughout the organization and advise the ADCOM on ways to build, reinforce, and make changes to the culture. This team should include a member from ADCOM, Faculty, Convocation (Non-Faculty), Senior Staff, Junior Staff, and a representative from each School/Faculty and SRC.
- There should be an annual culture audit by the culture team to know if the culture is moving in the right or wrong direction and if potential, influential events are affecting the culture negatively so they can respond to proactively.

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